

## **Case Study for Stockton Learning and Skills Service**

### **Effective Governance:**

This case study explains the role of a National Leader of Governance (NLG) when supporting a local authority provider to set up new governance structures.

### **Principles of good governance: Clear governance and management structures**

1. The service has identified that we needed to strengthen its governance arrangements to include scrutiny that is external to its council structure. Managers and Officers have put together a brand new board and are looking for support to help establish the board to be effective in its duties.
2. The service acknowledges the need to improve its Traineeship and Apprenticeship performance along with overall achievement across the rest of the service to move towards becoming outstanding.
3. The service is in a Devolution Deal area i.e. Tees Valley and will need support and direction from the governing body in preparation for local commissioning of adult education.

### **Context**

Stockton Learning and Skills Service is part of Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council's Regeneration and Economic Development department. The principal joined the Service in November 2015 and the quality manager in May 2016. The senior management team comprises three managers who are supported by six team leaders with responsibility for curriculum development. The Service provides courses at a range of venues across the area; a significant proportion is offered in three adult learning centres. The governing body met for the first time on 20 October 2016.

Aims of the NLG programme of support – to support Stockton Learning and Skills Service to achieve the following:

1. establish the board of governors and build its effectiveness

2. support governors to work with leaders and managers to improve provision in traineeship and apprenticeship performance
3. support governors to work with leaders and managers to prepare for the commissioning of local adult education.

## **Methodology**

### Establishing the board and building its effectiveness

- Preparation for the first meeting; understanding the role of a governing body in relation to a local authority accountability structure
- Presentation to governing body at second meeting on how governance is inspected

The Principal contacted the AoC Governance Unit and asked for an NLG experienced to support the setting up of a new governing body. A series of two telephone calls and emails supported the development of an agenda for the meeting and the terms of reference. Further telephone meetings with the NLG after the first governing body meeting in October 2016 was used to review this meeting and prepare for the second meeting.

The NLG attended the second meeting, having prepared a presentation that covered:

- the NLG programme of support for the service
- the role of a governing body in a local authority provider
- how governance is inspected under the CIF 2015 and what inspectors look for.

### **Improving the performance of apprenticeships and traineeships**

- The NLG led discussions at the second governors' meeting on governors' role in gaining an overview of apprenticeships and traineeships; what information they would need and how they could gather direct evidence; use of data etc.

### **Preparing for the commissioning of local adult education**

- The NLG led discussions on what governors need to shape the strategy for the provision and evaluate its impact on the local area

## **Results**

- The Principal felt more confident about holding the first meeting, having discussed that agenda with the NLG – this meeting successfully set the scene for the now governing body. Governors represent a broad range of

local interests internal and external to the Council – with very good potential for providing useful support and challenge to leaders and managers.

- Examples of terms of reference and other documents provided useful templates for the Principal to use with the governors.
- The second meeting was used to appoint a chair and vice chair and key link roles e.g. for safeguarding.
- The presentation from the NLG and ensuing discussions were deemed to build a more confident governing body as they helped set a clear direction for their role in supporting the Service. The discussions also helped governors identify the key information they needed to allow them to do the job effectively by building on their expertise and experience to make a productive contribution to the development of the Service.
- The NLG supported leaders by challenging some of the judgements in the self-assessment report and outlining the advantages of having an ongoing self-assessment process – that can be demonstrated to/supported by the governors.
- Discussions were started on preparing for commissioning of the service, such as representation on the local Learning and Skills Board – supported by members

**Further action** to be taken by leaders, with governors:

- Dissemination of background information and data to governors – as identified during discussions in the second meeting
- Governors to identify priorities in developing the effectiveness of the governing body – including understanding the nuances of the different types of programmes, links with curriculum, familiarisation with performance data, clarification of purpose of the provision etc.
- Review and finalise the self-assessment report
- Preparation for next meeting – building on the momentum provided by the NLG programmes of support.